

Boost your
living space

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Tears of a mermaid

The National Ballet of China is the country's first ballet troupe approved to present one of the works of John Neumeier, the world's top choreographer.

After studying its dancers, Neumeier was adamant that the ballet's first production be *The Little Mermaid*, a piece he created in 2005 to commemorate the 200th birthday of Hans Christian Anderson.

Neumeier's ballet augments the classic tale with the context of sad episode in Anderson's own life.

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Teens face
safety, health
risks abroad

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Social media
powerful tool
for feminists

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Students face challenges abroad

Safety, mental health serious concerns for int'l teens

By Zhao Hongyi

As many as 413,600 Chinese students will study abroad this year, according to a report this week by the Social Science Academic Press of China and Center for China and Globalization Studies.

As studying abroad transforms from an elite opportunity to a component of mass education, students must be aware of the dangers to their safety and mental health in new and unfamiliar environments.



The 17th Beijing International Education Exhibition held earlier this year in Beijing. As before, the exhibition attracted huge interested students and their families to choose which university and country to go.

CFP Photo

Explosive growth

Since 1978, some 2.25 million students have gone abroad for their studies, according to data recorded by the Chinese Service Center for Scholars Exchanges (CSCSE) under the Ministry of Education.

The Center provides training service to the students before they go abroad and offers official accreditation of the diplomas they bring home.

The number of Chinese students heading abroad has increased 20 percent each year since 2008.

Last year, the number of Chinese students going abroad for higher education surged to 339,700 – a 19.3 percent increase over the previous year.

Chinese students studying abroad occupy 14 percent of the number of students studying abroad around the world, according to the report. It sends more to the US, UK, Australia, Canada and Japan than any other country.

There were 87,533 Chinese students studying in Japan at the end of May 2011 – 63 percent of the country's total foreign student population.

At the same time, 157,558 Chinese students were studying in the US, meaning more

than one in five foreign students were from China.

The report forecasts that the trend will continue. By 2017, more than 1.1 million Chinese students will be studying abroad.

Competitive advantage

Students' reasons for studying abroad are changing: rather than seeking academic opportunity, many families look at a foreign education as a way to boost their competitiveness.

"This trend has become clearer since China joined the World Trade Organization and became more connected to the outside world," the report said.

A remarkable change is the age of the students studying abroad.

In the 1980s and 1990s, nearly all the students headed abroad were university graduates who wanted to earn a post-graduate degree.

But a decade of increasing family incomes has more parents eager to send their children out during high school – even in primary school.

Their primary destinations are the US, Australia and the UK, because they believe these countries have the most sophisticated education systems.

The students are also exploring new fields, such as real estate, criminology, landscape design and film.

"Educational institutes in these countries are following the market trends closely to attract Chinese students," the report said.

Paying their way

In the early 1980s, most of the students sent abroad were funded by the Chinese government. Their task was simple: to master sciences and technologies in developed countries and return to build the country.

But since the late 1980s, more Chinese students have been going abroad using scholarships awarded by foreign universities.

In the past decade, many have started to bear all the costs on their own. Last year, 90 percent of the 339,700 Chinese students who went abroad did so on their own money.

What is more eye-catching is that working-class families are sending their kids abroad – it's not just the rich.

The trend is enhanced by a simplification of the procedures for acquiring passports and visas.

"This is because China is

more open and foreign educational institutions are promoting themselves in the country," the report says.

The number of government-sponsored students is increasing as well.

The Chinese government sent thousands of students to study abroad in the 1980s, and the number has grown by tens of thousands in each decade since.

In 2003, it set up a project to award \$5,000 to the many excellent students selected to study abroad each year.

Safety and security

But with younger and less experienced children headed abroad, new problems are emerging.

Many students struggle to adapt to their new environment, at times becoming victims of violent crime.

This year, a number of Chinese students were murdered while abroad.

"This alarmed many students and showed them they need to protect themselves," said Yang Liangxing, deputy director of CSCSE.

Between October, 2007 and June 2012, 18 Chinese students were murdered in countries where they were

studying, working and living, Yang said.

Many reports said the students were from wealthy families and made a show of their fortunes, driving luxury cars, going to clubs, entertaining multiple girlfriends and playing at business instead of dedicating themselves to their studies.

"Such habits breed misfortune and tragedy," Yang said.

"Bogus schools" is another problem. The kids, especially from rich families, often care little about the quality of their education. Many are simply looking for a way to transfer their estate to a foreign country.

Teens are especially likely to become upset and irrational while living abroad, as they are still maturing psychologically.

The report called on Chinese embassies, consulates and Confucius academies to improve their crisis handling and support young students in their life abroad.

"Learning to study hard and integrate into society should be the most important purposes of Chinese students heading abroad," Yang said. "Only in this way can they have a better future."

Organizers of Women's Voice shave their heads to ask for gender equality in university enrollment.

Photos provided by Women's Voice



Feminist organization takes to social media to promote cause

By Liu Xiaochen

In the fight for women's equality, 140 characters can go a long way, as one influential women's rights organization in China is proving.

Women's Voice, a microblog started in June 2010, has nearly 10,000 followers, and two highly publicized and successful campaigns under its belt. Its operators – Media Monitor for Women Network, an organization that specializes in advocating for gender equality in media – say the microblog is uniquely positioned to deliver messages to the public.

"Microblogs are a microcosm of society," said Lü Pin, one of the writers on Women's Voice.

Media Monitor for Women Network was established in 1996 by media specialists. There are three people in charge of the office who collect stories about gender issues that appear in mass media. They publish information about gender inequality and bias, and disseminate it any way they can, including through original and translated reports and articles.

"We had to carve out our own position in social media," said Lü, who has worked at the newspaper *China Women's Daily* for 10 years. "We want to establish a new platform for the dissemination of our information."

One of the organization's



biggest stories was a June 20 post from Shanghai Metro's microblog that asked women to dress conser-

vatively so as to avoid sexual harassment. Women's Voice forwarded the message and got an incred-

ible amount of feedback.

"On the microblog we asked women to share their own experiences of sexual harassment," said Xiong Jing, who runs the microblog and is an editor at Media Monitor for Women Network.

To further promote discussion, the group took photos on Beijing subway stations and trains and posted them online, asking for replies.

A month later, Shanghai Metro Company changed its tone, asking the masses to be civil while riding.

Other successful campaigns include getting the Ministry of Education to address the issue of fixed male-to-female enrollment ratios at colleges. While the ministry would only say that the requirement is "based on national interests," just getting their reply attracted plenty of netizen attention.

Three organizers from Women's Voice publicly shaved their heads on August 30 in Beijing, drawing widespread discussion online about gender discrimination in university enrollment.

"Through this action, we hope that the Ministry of Education can reconsider the issue," Xiong said. "Women's interests are also national interests, and that means no gender discrimination."

On September 23, Media Monitor for Women Network published a special report

with guidelines for advocating women's rights through social media.

In the report, Lü said operating an account requires constant information collection. At the same time, interaction with readers is important.

"Each controversial event is an opportunity," she said. "Controversy is always better than no one noticing ... We want people to pay more attention to our views."

Wu Ang, who runs Chengbiancun.com, a website providing news for migrant workers, said he's concerned about women's health issues.

"Many of these problems are not recognized by the public and need to be addressed. Microblog advocacy is a way to do it," she said.

Women's Voice also organizes and participates in offline activities, which they promote through its microblog.

"Feminism in China isn't really accepted at this point," Lü said. "It's an obstacle. It's lucky that we aren't viewed in a negative light ... but there is a lot of work that needs to be carried out."

She said awareness is very important, and for that end, social media can be a great tool.

"We need to give our participants the platform to express their point of view," she said.

Suffering for love

National Ballet of China joins John Neumeier for

Although it's China's finest ballet company, the National Ballet of China (NBC) has a lot of work ahead of it to win the attention of the world's master.

Six years ago, after years' tour in Europe, the ballet was approved to dance Roland Petit's works. This year, it got John Neumeier.

By Yu Shanshan

As director and chief choreographer of the Hamburg Ballet for almost 40 years, Neumeier, 70, is one of the few living choreographers able to create full-length story ballets.

His high productivity and powerful narrative approach come from an interest in history, literature and drama.

NBC's relationship with Neumeier began 13 years ago, when Zhao Ruheng, then artistic director of the company, met Neumeier during the Hamburg Ballet's first visit to Beijing to perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

But it was not until 2010 that negotiations became more intense. That year, Hamburg returned to present *Lady of the Camellias* in Beijing and met Feng Ying, the new director of NBC.

After observing the NBC and Beijing Dance Academy, its main talent pool, Neumeier proposed a performance of *The Little Mermaid*, based on his impression of "the serene and deep concentration of some of the dancers, their honest emotional quality and a unique aspect in their movement quality" — qualities he attributed to Chinese dance.

But Feng was looking for something that could be better tailored for NBC. *Lady of the Camellias*, considering the tastes of Beijing ballet fans, would be a much more suitable start, she said.

"*The Little Mermaid* looked too...deep," Feng said.



The production was created in 2005 for the Royal Danish Ballet to commemorate the 200th birthday of Hans Christian Andersen. Far from a Disney fairytale, Neumeier created a story that would lead the audience through the dark side of humanity.

"This may be 20 years too soon for a Chinese audience. They want an entertaining or dramatic story — not to savor the potential of ballet," Feng said.

Lukewarm applause proved her guess, even though critics were

politely encouraging.

Feng was motivated and began to look for a chance to take NBC to the level of the company of the local audience.

"I feel NBC has a trend," Feng said.

But being a leader

Dancers said it was a mix of Lera Auerbach's style and the fluid dance of the ensemble dancers, though they were

Neumeier and his team to explain the relationships, contrasting many of whom are movements, but the intricacies of the

The Little Mermaid is a story about

"You have to enter with emotion and

ment," he said.

The mood of the production became quite atmospheric. When that man gave life, Andersen was

Neumeier uses a blue undersea world of mermaids.

The little mermaid and two characters dance the time. It is love the mermaid to give up tail and

Being cut off from



For The Little Mermaid

ing.
ved by Neumeier's insistence
k for a work that would give
o taste mastery while raising
dance troupe, and eventually
ence.

has a responsibility to set the
der isn't easy.

was difficult to follow the tempo
s otherworldly compositions,
nce to represent the little mer-
nsiderable muscle power—even
cers are called on to perform as
the center of the stage.

his assistants worked at length
eaning of the story and its rela-
ts and tensions to the dancers,
re young enough to manage the
oo young to grasp and express
personal relationships.

maid is not a story about danc-
out people, Neumeier said.

vision it as a real situation, react
d translate it into pure move-

he work is based on Anderson's
While living with a family, he
ached to one of the men in it.
ot married and went on with his
s deeply hurt.

s Anderson's tears to escape to a
rld, where he creates the image

maid is Anderson himself, and the
nce shoulder by shoulder most of
in the human world that inspires
row out of the writer's control,
eaving behind her world.

f from the familiar fairytale
mance between a prince and

princess, the dancers were forced to deal
with contemporary social challenges.

In one amusing attempt to motivate them,
the translator for Neumeier's assistant Niurka
Moredo asked female dancers to imagine the piece
is about women's liberation.

"You can always hear her shouting those two
words at rehearsal. She asked our girls not to rely
on the male dancers' arms, but to be more proac-



tive in each movement," Yi said.

"The whole story becomes an allegory for
women's liberation. The little mermaid gives up
her convenient life in the ocean and struggles with
pain for pure love in a new world."

The new world isn't necessarily better.

The prince finds her on the beach, but
sees her as a fancy novelty and soon marries
another woman.

The little mermaid, who can hardly walk,
finally understands that she can never completely
become a human being, and that she left her world
to chase an impossible goal.

That realization combines ironic laugh-
ter, tears, vanity and brutality—ele-
ments of hustle and bustle
that all encour-

ter in their interactions with society.

The little mermaid is left with no way back,
other than to kill the prince at the behest of the sea
witch—something she refuses.

The ending is not all tragedy.

On stage, the little mermaid and Anderson
walk out from the small white room that con-
fines their bodies and souls and begin to dance
among the stars.

The scene represents Anderson's own destiny,
Neumeier said: his salvation was his work. He
made an ending in which both Anderson and his
soul character enter into a new world of redemp-
tion and spiritual immortality.

"The greater love prevails," Feng said.

At the press release with local media, Feng and
her team tried to connect the ballet with Asian ele-
ments, drawing comparisons between the mer-
maid's tails and hakama pants worn in Japanese
Noh and between the face of the sea witch and
Peking Opera makeup.

But the most important, and perhaps hardest
to explain, is the ballet's introspective and reserved
way of thinking about life—the element that made
Neumeier so insistent about making it his first
work with NBC.

It was through performance that the dancers
came to understand.

"Working with the master, I came to under-
stand the importance of acting in dance. This
was a turning point in my career," said Cao
Shuci, 23, who plays the woman who marries
the prince.

"It's my first big show," said Ma Xiaodong, the
young prince. "It's

the first time I've had to put real feelings into
the character of a prince. He taught us how
to perform from within and show individuality
through movement."

Older dancers found the ballet profound.

Sheng Shidong, who plays the sea witch, only
recently returned to the stage after injury. "For a
long time, I've felt really down. This play opened a
new world for me," he said.

"I see my life in *The Little Mermaid*," said Zhu
Yan, who plays the titular character.

Although it left the performers with a deep
impression, the work still has a gaping void. Apart
from Zhu Yan's lively performance, there was
much emotion that NBC failed to convey.

Some art editors have murmured that NBC
could ruin the Neumeier creative brand, as he
had his hand in every segment of the production
from choreography to set design, lighting, cos-
tumes and even makeup.

Even by the middle of August, NBC had yet
to announce its final casting, and Neumeier was
refusing all requests for an interview. When the
audience applauded on opening night, the chore-
ographer was visibly shaking his head and van-
ished behind the curtain to give new instructions
to the dancers.

"A real ballet can never be finished over-
night. It took him three years to create *The
Little Mermaid*, and we expect to evolve with
it," Feng said.

Neumeier used to say that the ballet was
about suffering for the sake of love. Time
will tell whether he was describing *The Little
Mermaid* or his coop-
eration with
NBC.

Photos by Si Tinghong

**"A real ballet can
never be finished over
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three years to create
The Little Mermaid,
and we expect to
evolve with it."**



“Blockbusters and art films can coexist in the film market”
— Wang Chao

Memory of Love



By Niu Chen

Wang Chao, one of China's "Sixth Generation" directors, focuses on the middle class in his latest film, *Memory of Love*.

His previous films were known to deal with China's underclass, but he decided to go a different direction this time.

"Most of our friends don't live on the margins of society," he said. "But what about their states of mind?"

The film focuses on the problems that beset its middle class characters, such as marriage crises.

He Sizhu, an interior designer, has been married to Li Xun, a surgeon, for three years. One morning in the hospital, Li is informed that his wife has been involved in a car accident with her dancing instructor, Chen Mo. Li discovers that the two are having an affair and is shocked by his wife's infidelity.

Chen undergoes brain surgery and can't remember the last three years of her life. Li is still in love with her and can't bear to see her suffer, but to cure her amnesia, he must introduce her to Chen and risk their marriage.

After deliberation, Li decides to help He regain her memory. In the following months, Li accompanies He to relive important events in their past, such as taking wedding pictures.

Li tells He about the car accident and her affair with Chen during the course of the treatment. He can't remember a thing about it.

But the day finally comes when she remembers her past and realizes that she made a mistake with Chen.

Yan Bingyan, who plays He Sizhu in the film, said that affairs are common among those in the middle class.

"Honestly, many of us have cheated on our partners or have been cheated on by others," the 40-year-old Yan said. "Such topics appear frequently in our lives and we seldom seriously look at it. The film confronts this problem directly

in its storytelling."

Yan considered the love scenes the most challenging part about the film.

"I felt very unnatural at first and once cried on site," Yan said. She said that some viewers may feel that erotic scenes in domestic movies don't feel right because the actors hold back.

"Viewers will notice the actors' tension immediately," Yan said. "The more



Photos provided by Wang Chao

the actors feel embarrassed, the worse the scenes are. Anyway, I tried to be as relaxed as possible."

The erotic scenes, which last 40 to 50 seconds in the original version that was shown in France, are reduced to three seconds in the Chinese studio distribution. Yan and Wang said they were disappointed about the deleted scenes because they were consistent with the storyline and have real meaning.

"[The scenes] show the rudimentary relationship between two characters," Wang said. "They are part of the story."

Wang's films have enjoyed success overseas from the very beginning. His 2001 directorial debut, *The Orphan of Anyang*, was screened at the 54th Cannes Festival; his second film, *Day and Night*, won wild acclaim at the Festival of the 3 Continents in 2003; and his *Luxury Car* was the winner of the 2006 Prix un Certain Regard at the Cannes



Film Festival.

Wang pre-sold the copyright for *Memory of Love* and obtained some investment before making the film.

"TF1 bought the copyright and I got investment from a fund, which altogether paid for half of the film," he said. "After that, it was not hard to

find other investors."

Memory of Love premiered in France in 2009, two years ahead of its premiere in China. Wang said that the art film market in France is fairly stable and regular, which made recovering the cost easier. "I needed an investment of around 7 million yuan, and I had a market share of 400,000 to 800,000 euro in France," Wang said. "That is to say, I could find investment if the costs were managed."

Wang said he didn't plan to skip the domestic market. It was the distributor's decision not to release the film in China.

"Since I'm entitled to 50 percent of the film's profits, along with the money I gained by selling the film to foreign TV channels, I can recover the cost without releasing the film in China," Wang said. "So in the eyes of overseas distributors, [only releasing the film overseas] was the most convenient way

to see a return on investment."

Memory of Love was so welcomed by French viewers that it went through two rounds of screening in mainstream cinemas and art cinemas.

"Martial arts films and films that reflect the marginal lives of the poor were the only two types of film recognized in the Western world," Wang said. "*Memory of Love* entered the French mainstream cinema with a story that takes place in contemporary China."

Wang waited two years for a good time to release the film in China.

"We will lose money if the timing is wrong. It was better that I wait," Wang said. "At least I can preserve the profits [from overseas markets]."

After last year's success of Wang's *Buddha Mountain* and *Love for Life*, he felt that the time had come to screen *Memory of Love*.

"Their themes are even narrower than *Memory of Love*," Wang said. "But with promotion and marketing, they were accepted by viewers."

To bring *Memory of Love* to China, Wang bought back the film's copyright from distributors in France. Yan said she paid for her own travels during the film's tour in China, sharing the director's burden. "[Compared to Wang] it's not worth mentioning," Yan said.

Wang said current Chinese films lack diversity — there are too many kung fu and comedy flicks. "Blockbusters and art films can coexist in the film market," Wang said.

Yunnan food brings back holiday memories

By Annie Wei

Yunnan Province's reputation as a tourist destination is well earned, thanks to its beautiful scenery, minority cultures and local hospitality.

For those who aren't leaving town over the holiday, though, the next best thing might have to be going for a

taste of Yunnan.

Yunnan cuisine is known for using herbs to create light and healthy recipes, plus using mushrooms to create unique flavors and texture.

This week, *Beijing Today* introduces Yunnan restaurants with a good environment and food.

Yunnan rice noodles and old Beijing snacks

This small eatery was named after its address – eight, a lucky number. After being featured on a popular local TV food program, it's been packed with diners on most nights.

The owner is an old Beijinger. Twenty years ago, he visited Yunnan and loved the food. He later decided to open an eatery that sells Beijing and Yunnan dishes.

The best dish might be the braised pork wrap (38 yuan). The pork is half-lean and half-fat. Because its stewed well, it doesn't taste greasy. The pancake is prepared after ordering and comes out fresh.

Another popular dish is Yunnan rice (12 yuan). The rice and vegetables are shipped from Yunnan.

Batiao Yiao

Where: 1 Beibatiao, Xisi, Xicheng District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 6616 6292

Midian

Where: 57 Jiadokou Beisiantiao, Dongcheng District
Open: 11 am – 2:30 pm, 5 pm – midnight, closed on Mondays
Tel: 6402 7482

Memories of Lijiang

Suhe is a beautiful town near Lijiang, Yunnan Province. The restaurant called Suhe takes its name from that town, and offers hotpot in buffet style.

We recommend its mushroom soup (118 yuan to 168 yuan), as Yunnan is known for its various mushrooms.

Chicken meat with rice noodles and guilingao, a slightly bitter jelly made of herbal roots, is complimentary.

Exceptional dishes include xuanwei huotui, ham produced in Yunnan Province that is a little sweet and very slightly salty.

We also recommend Xiangniurou, marinated beef soaked with chili oil and Sichuan peppers, very tender after boiling.

Suhe Renjia

Where: 17 Beibingmashi Hutong, Dongcheng District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 5721 8898



Braised pork wrap, 38 yuan



Fried toro balls, 32 yuan

Photos by Lu Di



Mushroom soup hotpot, starting at 118 yuan

Home-style Yunnan flavors

The restaurant is easy enough to find, a small bungalow just one alley south of Fangjia Hutong with only four tables. The decor is homey.

The prices here are lower than at most Yunnan restaurants, and the atmosphere makes it a hidden gem.

A cold tomato dish is 10 yuan; spicy chicken with sauce (26 yuan), jasmine flower salad (18 yuan), special Yunnan fungus in oil (24 yuan), palm flower (28 yuan), sautéed jasmine flower with eggs (32 yuan), sautéed sponge guard (20 yuan), lime-braised fish

(58 yuan) and steamed chicken with sticky rice (38 yuan) are all reasonably priced.

We recommend the palm flowers (28 yuan), fried banana tree flowers that taste like bamboo shoots. Banana trees are abundant in southern China.



Yunnan ham comes recommended

Photos by Lu Di

Pearson Longman English World

Exercise

Choose the correct words:

Give the correct preposition if needed or / if none is needed because the verb takes a direct object:

1. a. His motorbike crashed _____ a tree.
b. I thought he'd crash _____ his car sooner or later.
2. a. The children asked their grandfather to join _____ the game.
b. She has just joined _____ an expensive tennis club.

Answers: 1. a. into b. / 2. a. in b. /



Book title:

Common English Errors in Hong Kong (New Edition) 是一本专门为香港初、中级英文水平的学生所编写的自学教材。本书指出并纠正大量本地学生所常犯的英文文法与字法使用上的错误，并附有非常生动活泼的插图，深受青少年学生的青睐。

资料来源: Language Leader (Pre-intermediate) by Ian Lebeau and Gareth Rees (Pearson Longman)

crash / crash into

- ✗ The cars crashed ^ each other.
- ✓ The cars crashed into each other.



Cars 'crash into' objects. But people can 'crash cars' (without 'into'):

- ✓ The driver was very young and crashed the car.

join / join in

1. ✗ At the picnic, Gary joined ^ many activities.
✓ At the picnic, Gary joined in many activities.



You 'join in' activities or games, not 'join'.

2. ✗ Mr Chan was accepted to join in the club.
✓ Mr Chan was accepted to join the club.



You 'join' a club, not 'join in'.

Living spacious for cheap

By Annie Wei

For many young urbanites, living in a spacious apartment is a dream that's hard to realize.

This week, Li Jiajia, a former fashion store designer and now the co-owner of a cafe, shows *Beijing Today* how she and her husband turned a 166-square meter unfurnished rental apartment into a comfortable home.

Like others, Li bought a small apartment some years ago, on East Fourth Ring Road. It was one of those tiny "loft" apartments that real estate developers sold to young singles: 30-something-square-meters downstairs with a bathroom, open kitchen and living room, with a bedroom upstairs.

Li said she and her husband soon realized it didn't fit them.

"It's too small and neither of us wanted to spend time at home," Li said.

Eventually, she told her husband she didn't want to live like that. They decided to work out something to achieve a better quality of life.

Li sold her loft and moved to Wanxiang Xintian, a big residential compound outside Fifth Ring Road at Changying. Although it seems quite far from downtown, there are plenty of buses that pass through Chaoyang Park, Sanlitun and Sanyuanqiao. Li's parents-in-law also bought a duplex in the same compound, and it's become convenient to look after them.

The couple signed a three-year contract starting at 3,000 yuan per month, with a 200 yuan increase per year.

An unfurnished apartment might scare off many tenants, but thanks to Li's experience as a store designer, it took them only 15 days to decorate it.

First, one needs to buy a toilet and showerhead. Both can be found for a few hundred yuan.

Li said they asked a friend who was an experienced carpenter to make the kitchen board for a stove and sink.

Li bought a floor sealer to prevent the concrete from getting too dusty. Floor sealers are much cheaper than self-leveling mortar, which is used in high-end loft apartments to create an industrial style.

After painting the walls, the couple moved in.

"We didn't have much to move in at first, just the washing machine and refrigerator from my old apartment," Li said. "We had to use the washing machine's box as our working table for a while."

Then they slowly filled the apartment with things they found from secondhand markets.

"There are so many nice things (at secondhand markets)," Li said. "With a bit of creativity, I feel it's unnecessary to buy anything brand-new."

Every time she spots something she likes, she tries to figure out how to use them someday.

Li applies the same concept to her coffee store, Edge Cafe.

Her wood shelves are from recycled wood. "I found them in a market really far away, almost like rubbish," she said. The wood was used in construction fields. Li collected some and scrubbed them smooth.

For her sofa, Li used the same wood as a frame and made the cushions herself. She purchased stuffing from the market and cut them into the right size, then wrapped them with fabric she found from the clothing market.



The bedroom



The wardrobe



Edge Cafe co-owner Guan Guan's living room; she lives in the same compound as Li Jiajia.



Table from a secondhand market



Spacious apartments are better for animals.



Living room and kitchen



Unfurnished bathroom



Li and Guan stocked Edge Cafe with items from secondhand markets.

Photos by Li Jiajia